

A PRIMA DONNA WHO TALKS.

The Famous People Miss Blanche Roosevelt Has Met—Her Operatic Career.

"Be careful how you get me started on the subject of myself," said Miss Blanche Roosevelt to a Post reporter, yesterday. He had asked her to tell him something of her musical career. The question was repeated.

"Well, in the first place, Pauline Lucca heard me sing in Chicago and insisted on my adopting the operatic career, giving me a letter to Madame Viardot, in Paris, sister to the great Malibran, and probably one of the best teachers in the world. With madam's letter I lost no time in starting for Europe, and unlike most students who went abroad to begin a musical education, I was sent to the care of kind and loving friends, who watched over, protected and helped me in all the incidental struggles of a student's life in Paris. I refer to the Hon. E. B. Washburne, then Minister to France, his wife, and the Hon. C. C. Washburne, of Wisconsin.

"After studying with Madame Viardot two seasons, I paid my second visit to London for recreation. While there, Mr. Gye, of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, heard me sing and engaged me as a prima donna for several years. I signed my contract two years from the day I sailed from America, and the following season I made my debut at Covent Garden as *Violetta* in 'La Traviata,' being the first native-born American to ever make an absolute first appearance on the royal Italian stage of that theatre. My success was so great that I was immediately engaged for all the promenade concerts following the season of opera. I next sang in Italy, in 'La Sonnambula,' and the result was so brilliant that I sang sixteen performances in twenty-one days to crowded houses, and received an honorary testimonial where I sang one act of 'La Traviata.' My last appearance in opera was in the spring of 1879. I sang 'Faust' by special request in French at the Grand Opera House in Versailles at the closing of the Senate.

"But all this talk about my singing and nothing about the pleasant people I met in the meantime. I warned you beforehand, however, what you might expect. I think the most celebrated person I met was Victor Hugo, a grand old man, who never ceases talking about America. He said that although he was so old it would be a crowning joy of his life to visit her shores.

"At Madame Viardot's I met a galaxy of great stars. She herself is one of the most brilliant women in Europe, besides being the greatest musician, and naturally is surrounded by the most celebrated people from every land. I must not forget the great Russian novelist, Turgeneff, who is a constant visitor. He looks quite the Cossack with powerfully built shoulders, huge frame, and massive features. His hair and long beard are snow white, while his blue eyes have a very intelligent and kindly beam. I was also especially attracted by M. Gounod, the great composer of 'Faust,' who is one of the most sympathetic men I ever met. He is utterly unassuming, very gay and not at all like what one would imagine him from the sentimental love-sick music of 'Faust.' Rubenstein, Verdi, Saint Saens, Ambroise Thomas, the son of Malibran, and De Berist, her husband, himself a brilliant musical genius, both at piano and violin, were frequent visitors.

"In Vienna, besides meeting the Emperor and Empress, who is very beautiful, I renewed my acquaintance with the great Swedish singer, Christine Nilsson. She was most amiable in all her remarks about America, and said the day was coming when all the world would give way to American musical talent. She was very kind during my stay in Vienna and gave me lessons in singing nearly every day. In the studio of Hans Mackart I saw the original designs of his famous picture, 'Charles V. Entering Antwerp,' before it was sent to the Paris Exposition. Mackart is a small man with black eyes and a flowing black beard. He is only five and thirty, and wonderfully young in years for one of so great a reputation.

"My first introduction in the literary society of London was at the house of Tom Taylor. Our party consisted of Mrs. Tom Taylor, my mother, William Black, Wilkie Collins, Robert Browning, and Charles Reade. I don't remember anything being said at the table; they were all English, you know, and devoted themselves to eating; but after there were enough wits, critics flying around to relieve the editor of Punch from any further duties for a year. During my last visit I met Lady Wylde and her 'too, too, too' Oscar. He was attired in a bottle-green reaingote with a pair of light gray unmentionables, tender, aesthetic garters in yellow cloth with patent-leather toes, a wide, open collar and an amiable necktie. To Madame de Staél, he carried in his hand a spray of delicate ferns. His hair is long and light, his eyes blue and complexion extremely brown; his jaws are very massive and remind one of—well, Oscar Wylde. His whole personality is so peculiar that he is utterly unlike any one in the world excepting his own utterly-utter self.

"By the way, do you recognize this handwriting?" selecting from her morning budget a dainty little letter with the monogram A. P. on the envelope, the address being written in fine Italian calligraphy. "This is from the greatest celebrity of all, Adelina Patti. You can't tell you of her, except that she is the only singer in the world; that is to say, has the most perfect voice. It is a glorious soprano, with a full range of notes, one not more beautiful or stronger than the other; her chest tones are like a contralto and her medium voice like a mezzo. She never sang better than at present and at her last concert in New York I asked myself, 'Has the world ever produced so great a cantatrice?' Her execution is so brilliant and limped that her voice pours from her throat in one continuous cascade of melody, and she sings with such ease and sweetness that it is a pleasure to look at her. She dresses superbly, and instead of one toilet she treats the public to two at each performance, changing her dress regularly between the first and second parts. She is coming to Washington very soon and you can all see and judge for yourselves."

"Miss Roosevelt," interrupted the reporter, "where were you born?"

"What was Chaucer's version of Shakespeare? Some are born to greatness and some are born in Ohio."

"Precisely, in the year of our Lord—
Good morning!"

Miss Roosevelt makes her American debut in grand opera with Manager Strakosch in New Orleans, where she expects soon to sing "Faust," "La Traviata" and two other operas. "La Traviata" is Madame Gerster's role, but she has amably consented to allow Miss Roosevelt to appear in it.